LOST TOWNS of OWENS VALLEY

HAL CARTER

Lost Towns of Owens Valley

A Field Guide to the Owens Valley Town Sites

by Hal Carter

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Introduction

What were they, where were they, and when did they go? These are the questions that I will attempt to answer.

The Owens Valley is bounded on the West by the almost vertical rise of the Sierra Mountains. On the East lie the White and Inyo Mountains. The Valley is open on either end.

I have restricted the area of study in an effort to keep the list of towns at a manageable level. I have not left the Valley floor on either side and Laws is the most northern town and Swansea the most southern town to be listed.

The information available on the towns and settlements has been gathered from Courthouse records, maps, and various books on the area. An effort has been made to verify the information by checking against other sources. This was not always possible but all of the information was included in an effort to be complete. Every effort will be made to help you locate the town sites.

This work will consider only those settlements that came into being after the first settlers came to the Valley. We will not discuss towns that are still in existence.

The purpose of this work will be to provide a ready record of communities that once were in the area and where they were located. Quarter section, Township & Range will also be listed.

The first settlements appear to have been started in 1861.

Cabins were built at Owensville and Little Pine

at about the same time. The development of the Valley seemed to follow mining activity, then ranching and farming, and later the railroad. The towns left as the activity that supported them became unprofitable. The communities, will be listed from the north end of the Valley to the south end.

LAWS NW1/4 SEC27 T6S R33E MDBM

Laws was first surveyed when the Carson-Colorado Railroad was built. It was built over part of the site of Owensville. The railroad to Keeler was completed in 1883, so it would appear that Laws started about the same time. In 1915, there were about 20 buildings, but today the present site of Laws appears to be more of a railroad museum than a community.

OWENSVILLE SW1/4 SEC27 T6S R33E MDBM

Owensville started during the Civil War and had several stone cabins. It was located on the eastside of the Owens River and by the time Laws was surveyed it had disappeared.

POLETA South side of SW1/4 SEC2 T7S R33E MDBM

Poleta is south of Owensville on the old Carson-Colorado Railroad. It appeared about the time the mining in the Poleta district became an economic reality. In 1915, Poleta consisted of 4 buildings.

TUNGSTON CITY NE1/4 SEC12 T7S R31E MDBM

Tungston City appeared on the maps after 1900. It appears to be about six miles west of Bishop and is north of Bishop Creek.

BIGELOW SE1/4 SEC14 T7S R33E MDBM

Bigelow is located on the Carson-Colorado Railroad about two and one-half miles south of Poleta. It is also on a map after the 1900's but no other information was located.

BLACK CANYON NE1/4 SEC1 T8S R33E MDBM

Black Canyon appears about six miles south of Bigelow on the railroad.

SALATORO NW1/4 SEC32 T8S R34E MDBM

Salatoro appeared on an 1883 mining map. It appears to be a few miles north of Big Pine on the Carson-Colorado Railroad. It would appear to be about five miles south of Black Canyon.

ZURICH NE1/4 SEC9 T9S R34E MDBM

Zurich appears on a railroad east of Big Pine where the Westguard Pass road crossed the railroad. It appeared the first time around 1900 on the maps. In 1915 there were 11 buildings. Another name for Zurich was Alvord. Zurich remained a train stop until the 1960's when Southern Pacific abandoned the line.

MONOLA SW Corner SE1/4 SEC22 T9S R34E MDBM

Minola appears on the maps about 1900. It is about two and one-half miles south of Zurich along the railroad.

BENEME NW1/4 SEC35 T9S R34E MDBM

Beneme appears on the Carson-Colorado map between Monola and Elna.

ELNA NE1/4 SEC11 T10S R34E MDBM

The Elna Station appeared on an 1883 map as a station on the Carson-Colorado Railroad. There were no buildings there in 1915. Today it is under the Tinnemaha Reservoir.

CHRYSOPOLIS SW1/4 SEC12 T11S R34E MDBM

Chrysopolis is south of Charlies Butte. It is on the 1864 map but was not located on later maps.

INTAKE SE1/4 SEC24 T11S R34E MDBM

Intake appears on the maps just south of Aberdeen.

BLACK ROCK SW1/4 SEC2 T12S R34E MDBM

Black Rock was a community that attempted to become a town in the 1860's. Little else is known of it other than it appears to be where the present Black Rock fish hatchery is located.

SAN CARLOS NE1/4 SEC20 T12S R35E MDBM

San Carlos appears to be one of the first major communities of the Valley. It started in the early 1860's and at one time it is reported to have had as many as sixty or seventy houses and numerous stores. It is on the east side of the Owens River approximately eight miles north of Kearsarge Station. By the time Independence was started, most of the people had left San Carlos.

BEND CITY NW1/4 SEC2 T13S R35E MDBM

Bend City appeared shortly after San Carlos and this city was a result of mining activity in the Inyo Mountains. It seemed to flourish also and was about the same size of San Carlos in the early 1860's. By the late 1860's, it too was abandoned.

FORT INDEPENDENCE SW1/4 SEC6 T13S R35E MDBM

Fort Independence was first established as Camp Independence on July 4, 1862, by the U.S. Army. It was abandoned a short time later, only to be reestablished in 1865, as a fort. Most of the buildings were adobe walls, but the 1872 earthquake destroyed the adobe buildings. The wooden buildings were sold when the fort was finally abandoned in 1877. Independence still has some of these buildings.

KEARSARGE NE1/4 SEC13 T13S R35E MDBM

Kearsarge is on the Carson-Colorado Railroad. It was originally listed as a town in the Sierras on the west side of Kearsarge Peak. However, by 1900, it appears on maps east of Independence. It was listed as Citrus on one 1915 map and had 7 buildings. It was maintained as a railroad station until the Southern Pacific closed the line.

FRANCIS SE1/4 SEC5 T14S R36E MDBM

Francis appears on the 1907 topo map at what would be the present Manzanar Reward Road and the Carson Colorado Railroad. No other mention of it was found.

MANZANAR SEC15 T14S R35E MDBM

Manzanar was originally George's Creek. George's Creek was a stage stop just north of the George's Creek and west of the Owens River but later bacame a farming community and was subdivided as the community of Manzanar. Due to marketing distances it did not do well. However, it did gain considerable notoriety in the 1940's as an interment camp for the Japanese-Americans. Today, it is a maintenance station for the Inyo County vehicles and a memorial to the Japanese-Americans that were interred there.

THEBE NE1/4 SEC10 T14S R35E MDBM

Thebe was found on a voter registration of 1896. It was also located on a 1915 map with four buildings.

REWARD SE1/4 SEC5 T14S R35E MDBM

The Reward Station appears on the maps by 1900. It is on the Carson-Colorado Railroad. It appears to be the result of the mine.

OWENYO NE1/4 SEC34 T14S R36E MDBM

Owenyo appears on the maps of the early 1900's. It was the switching yard for cargo from the Narrow Gage Railroad to the Standard Gage Railroad. The Standard Gage Southern Pacific would arrive from the south. A Narrow Gage would enter raised tracks above the Standard Gage tracks and would dump ore into the Standard Gage cars, for transportation to the southland. It operated as a cargo switching yard until the railroad was closed in the 1960's.

MT. WHITNEY SW1/4 SEC13 T15S R36E MDBM

Mt. Whitney appears on the maps about 1900. It appears on the Narrow Gage Railroad east of Lone Pine Station.

ALICO SW1/4 SEC4 T16S R37E MDBM

Alico appears further south on the railroad and appears to be a Siding.

DOLOMITE SW1/4 SEC10 T16S R37E MDBM

Dolomite is on the Carson-Colorado Railroad. It was maintained as a shipping origination point until the train closed.

MOCK NE1/4 SEC15 T16S R37E MDBM

Mock appears on the maps about 1900. It is just south of Alico on the Carson-Colorado Railroad.

TRAMWAY NE1/4 SEC23 T16S R37E MDBM

Tramway appears to be the terminus of the salt works just north of Swansea. The salt works operated an airiel tramway to transport salt from Saline Valley to the Owens Valley. It was abandoned in the 1930's.

SWANSEA SW1/4 SEC24 T16S R37E

Swansea was started as a smelter for the Cerro Gordo ore in the 1870's. It lasted a short time since the owners of the smelter of Cerro Gordo and Keeler managed to financially freeze it out. Today all that remains of the original settlement is a marker and part of the smelter.

DIAZ SW1/4 SEC11 T16S R35E

Diaz appears south and east of the current Diaz Lake. It appears to have been on the Southern Pacific Railroad line.

It is hoped that this information will be an aide to those of us who take to the fields in an effort to learn more about the history of the Owens Valley and its people.

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notes

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DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

BISHOP QUADRANGLE
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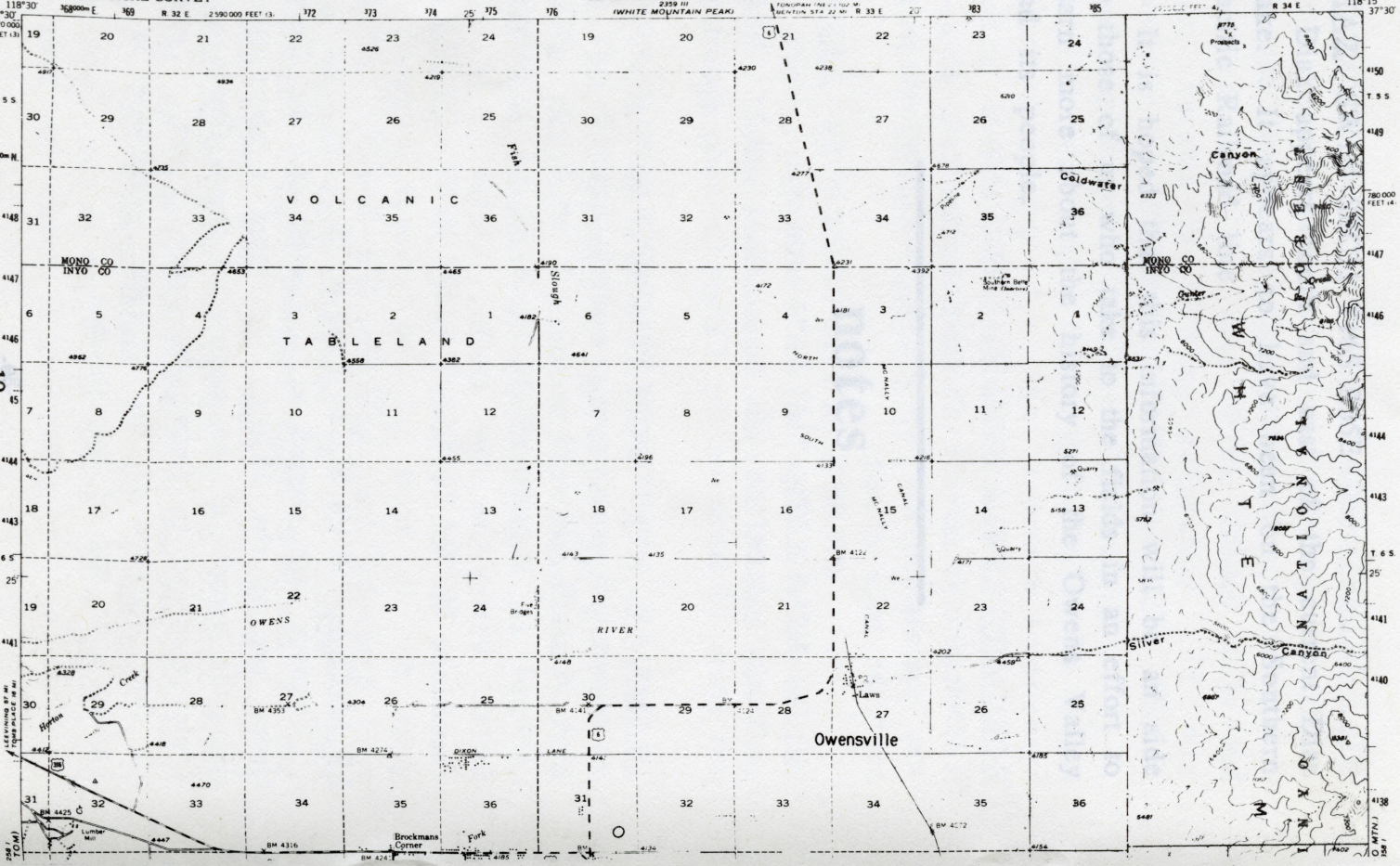
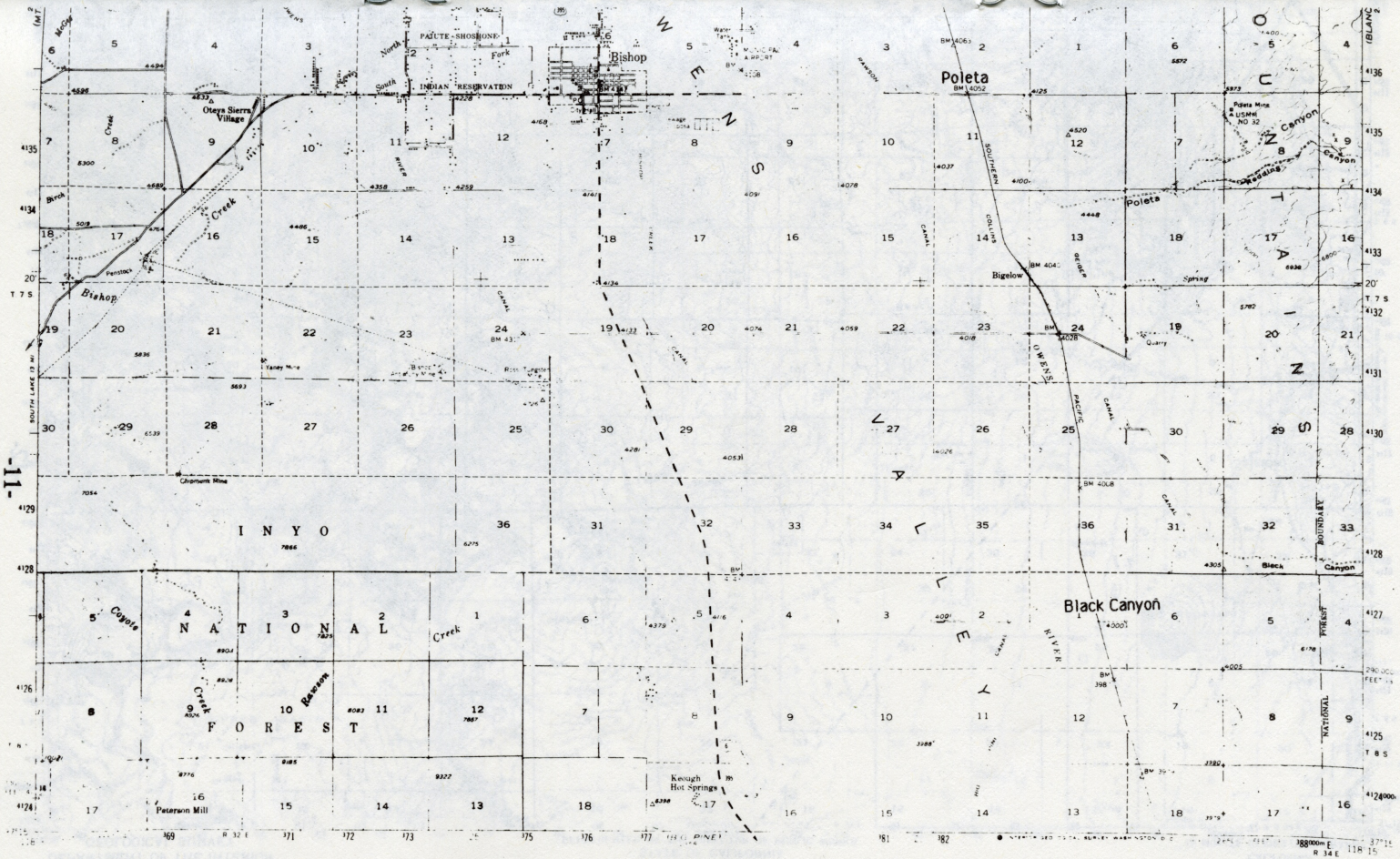
15 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)




Bishop
PAIUTE-SHOSHONE
INDIAN RESERVATION
Oteys Sierra Village
Poleta
Bigelow
Black Canyon
Poleta Mine
USMM NO 32
Chipmunk Mine
Yaney Mine
Keough Hot Springs
Peterson Mill
INYO
NATIONAL
FOREST
OWENS VALLEY
SOUTHERN PACIFIC
OWENS RIVER
Black Canyon
NATIONAL FOREST BOUNDARY
T 7 S
T 8 S
R 32 E
R 34 E

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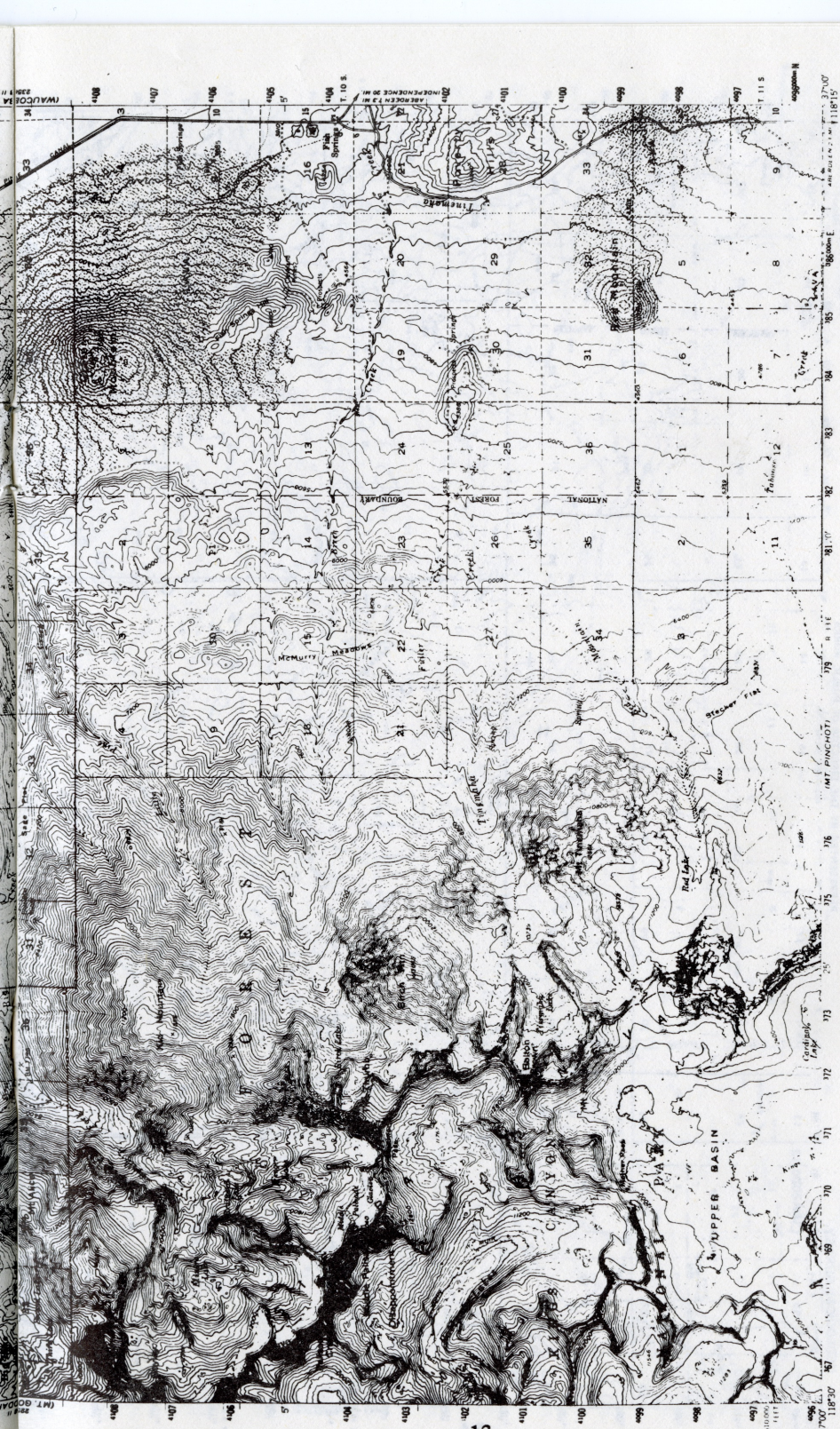
UPPER BASIN
McMurry Meadows
Red Lake
Stecker Flat
Tinemaha
Fish Springs
NATIONAL FOREST BOUNDARY
(MT PINCHOT)
(MT GODDAR)
(WAUCOBA)
118°15'
37°00'
37°00'
118°30'

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CALIFORNIA-INYO CO.
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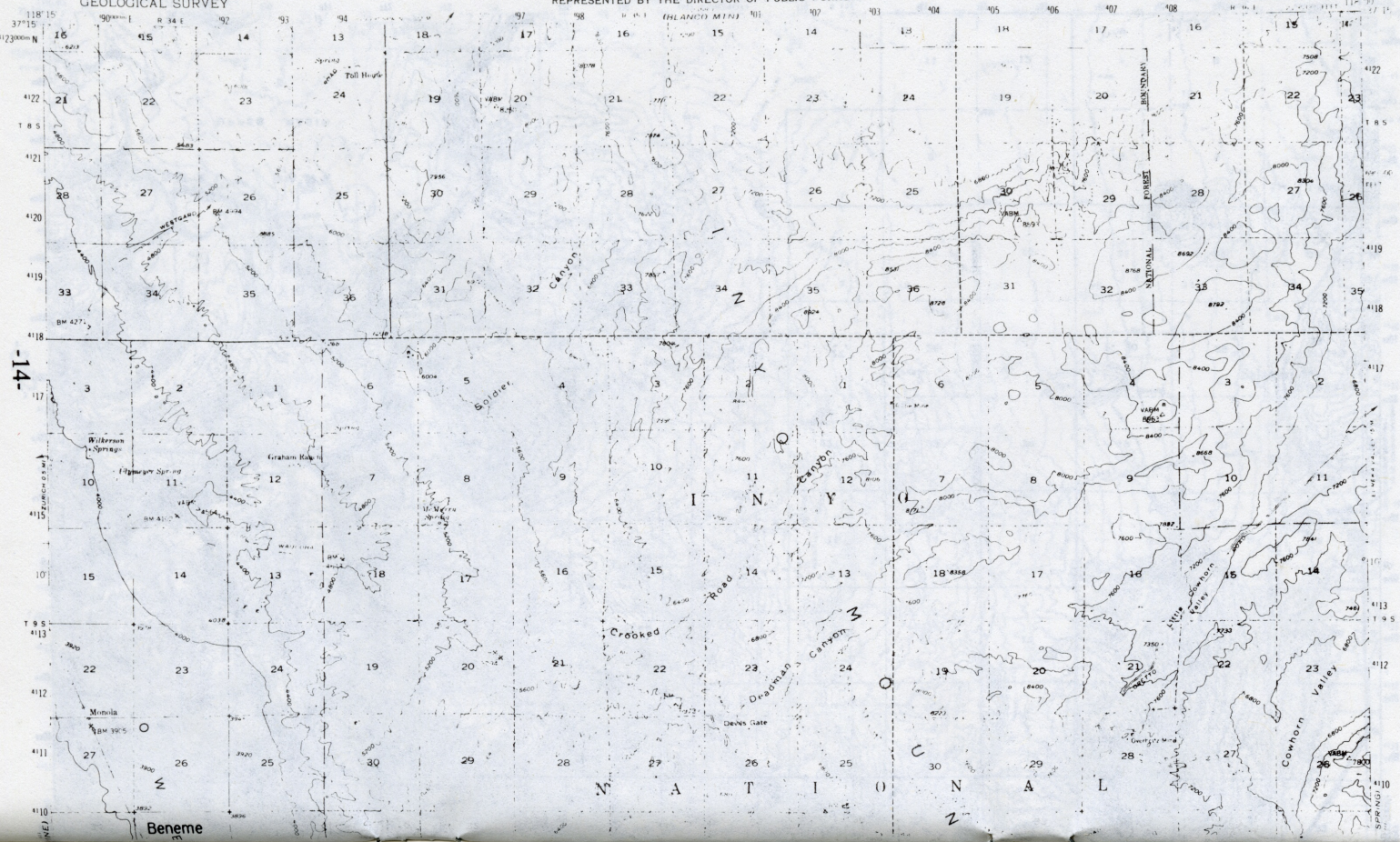
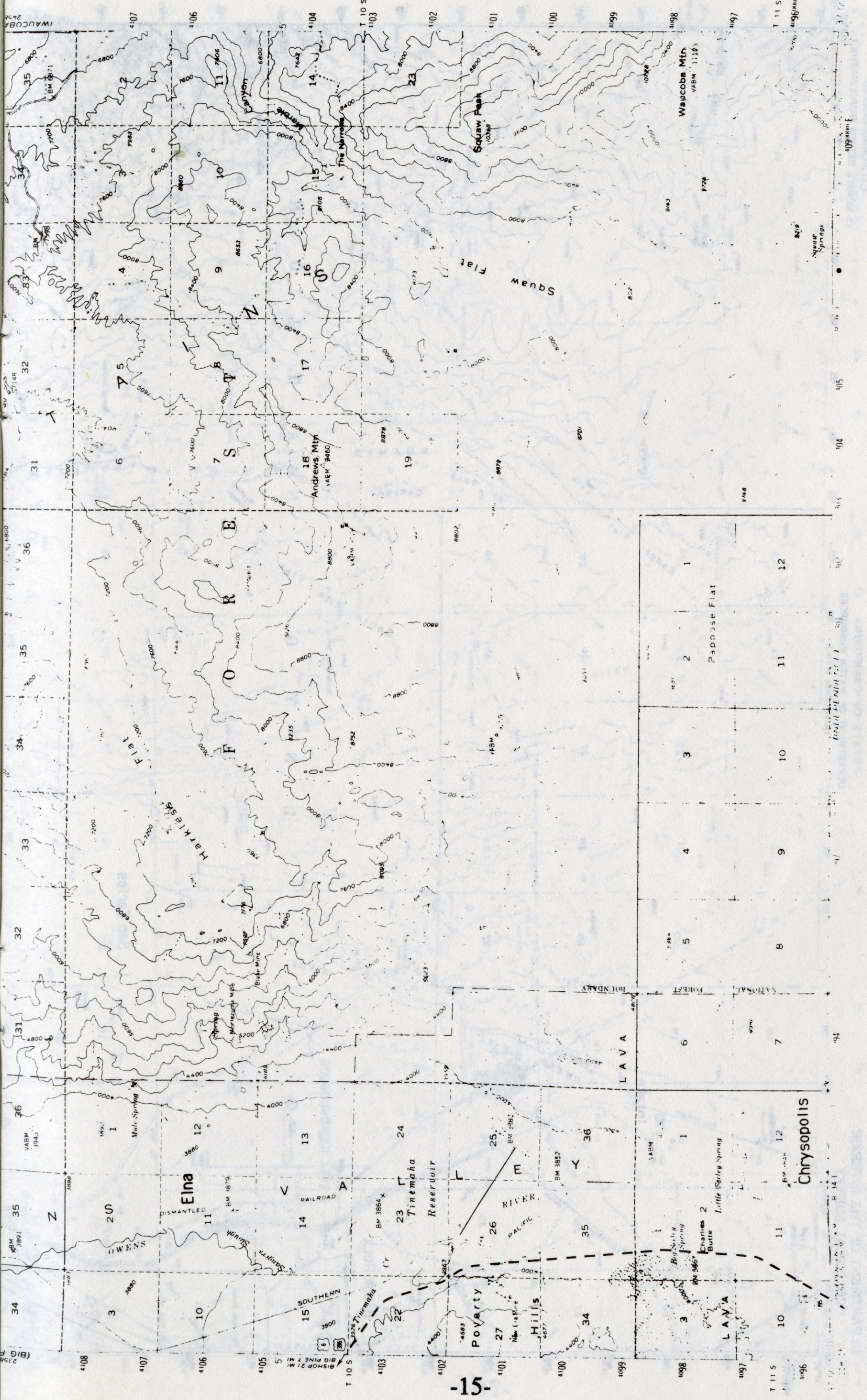
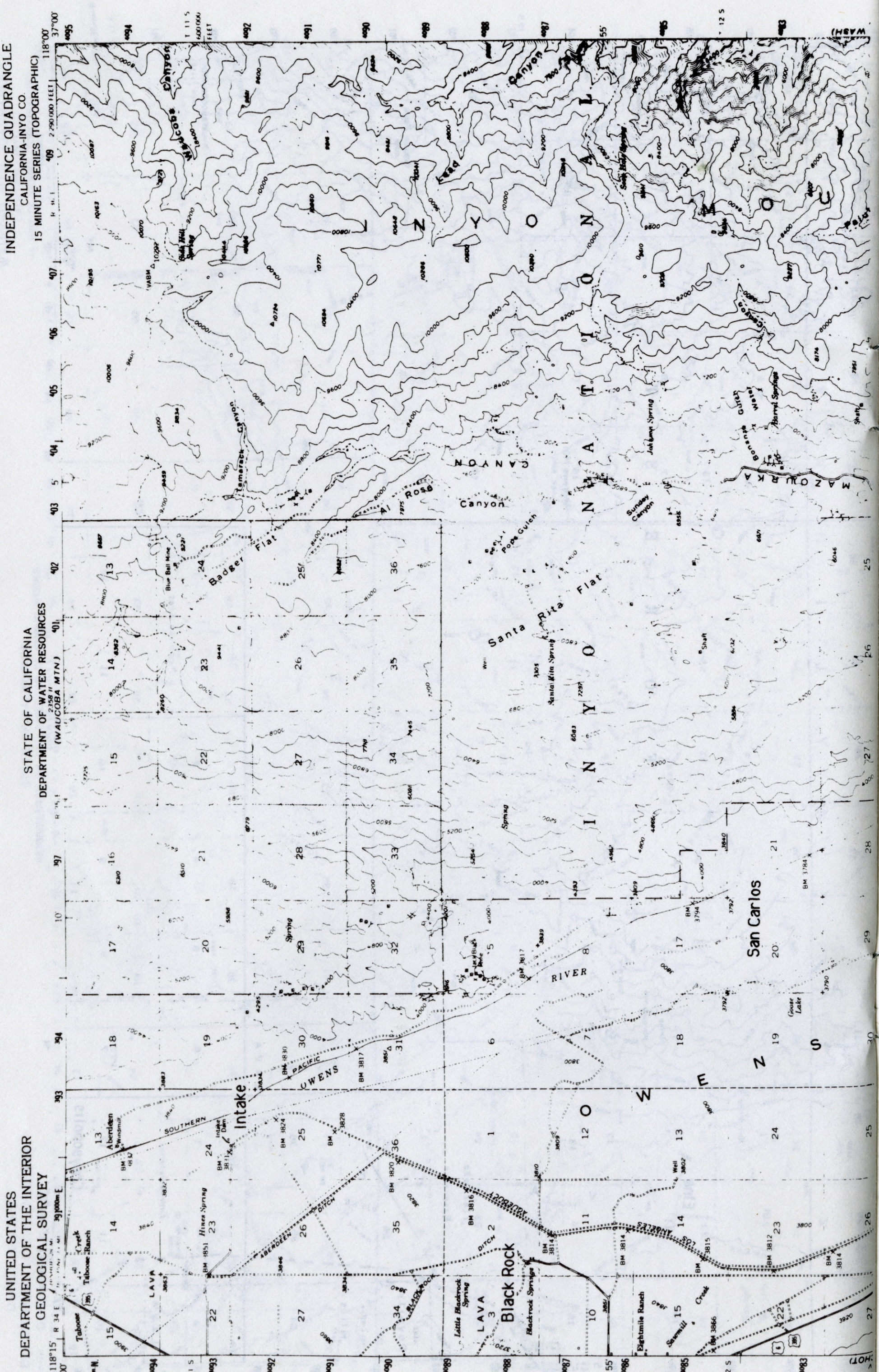



Waucoba Mtn
VABM 11123
Squaw Peak
10358
The Narrows
Marble
Canyon
Squaw Flat
Squaw Springs
Andrews Mtn
VABM 9460
Harkless Flat
Papoose Flat
Blake Mine
Montezuma Mine
Spring
Mule Spring
I N Y O
N A T I O N A L
F O R E S T
O W E N S
V A L L E Y
Elna
DISMANTLED
RAILROAD
SOUTHERN
PACIFIC
RIVER
Tinemaha Reservoir
Tinemaha Cr
Poverty Hills
Big Seeley Spring
Little Seeley Spring
Charlies Butte
Chrysopolis
L A V A
NATIONAL FOREST BOUNDARY
(INDEPENDENCE)
BISHOP 21 MI
BIG PINE 7 MI
T 10 S
T 11 S
R 34 E
(WAUCOBA)
(BIG PINE)


INDEPENDENCE QUADRANGLE
CALIFORNIA-INYO CO.
15 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
STATE OF CALIFORNIA
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(WAUCOBA MTN)
UNITED STATES
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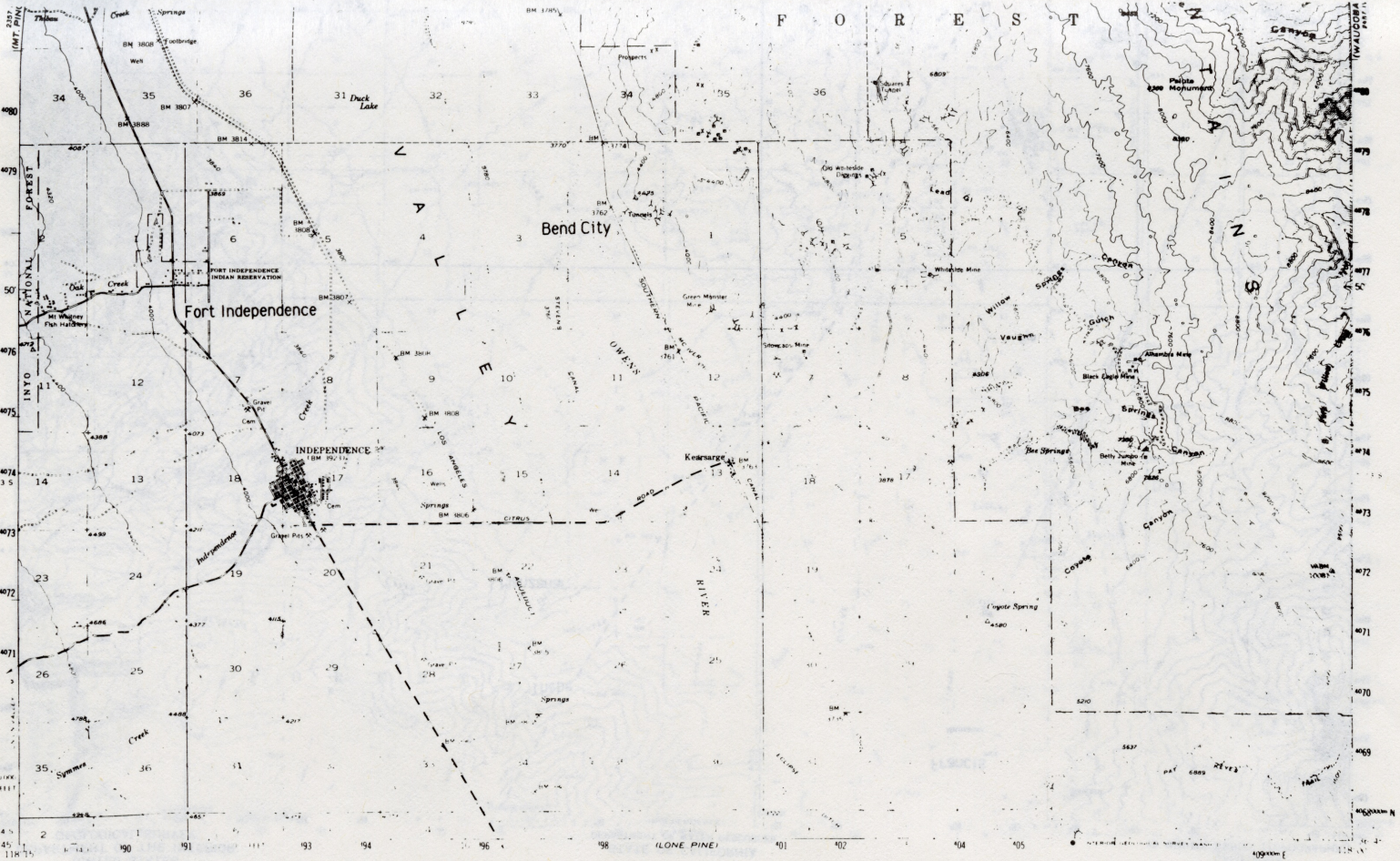
Waucoba Canyon
Tamarack Canyon
Blue Bell Mine
Badger Flat
Al Rose Canyon
CANYON
Pops Gulch
Santa Rita Flat
Santa Rita Spring
Sunday Canyon
Johnson Spring
Bonanza Gulch
Barrel Springs
MAZOURKA
INYO MOUNTAINS
Intake
Aberdeen
SOUTHERN PACIFIC
OWENS RIVER
OWENS
San Carlos
Goose Lake
Black Rock
Blackrock Springs
Little Blackrock Spring
LAVA
ABERDEEN DITCH
LOS ANGELES AQUEDUCT
Hines Spring
Taboose Creek
Taboose Ranch
Eightmile Ranch
Sawmill Creek
Intake Dam



F O R E S T
Bend City
Fort Independence
INDEPENDENCE
FORT INDEPENDENCE INDIAN RESERVATION
Mt Whitney Fish Hatchery
Duck Lake
Kearsarge
Independence
Oak Creek
Symmes Creek
Coyote Spring
Bee Springs
Willow Springs
Vaughn Gulch
Black Eagle Mine
Alhambra Mine
Betty Jumbo Mine
Whiteside Mine
Green Monster Mine
Stowcaps Mine
Old Whiteside Diggings
Palote Monument
Canyon
Tunnels
Prospects
Gravel Pits
Cem
Springs
Wells
Well
Footbridge
Thibau
Creek
Springs
INYO NATIONAL FOREST
OWENS RIVER
LOS ANGELES
AQUEDUCT
CITRUS ROAD
STEVENS CANAL
SOUTHERN PACIFIC
(LONE PINE)

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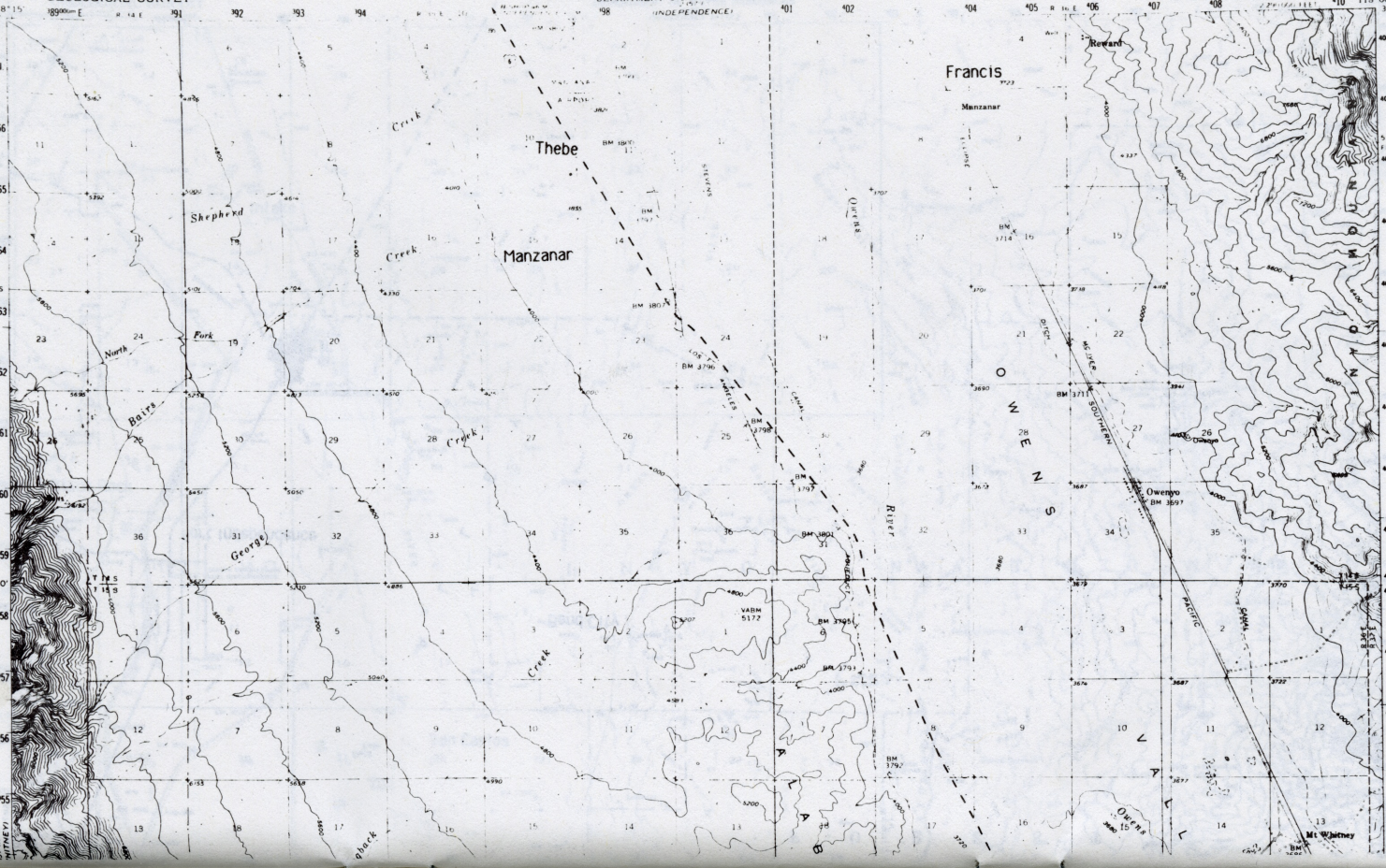

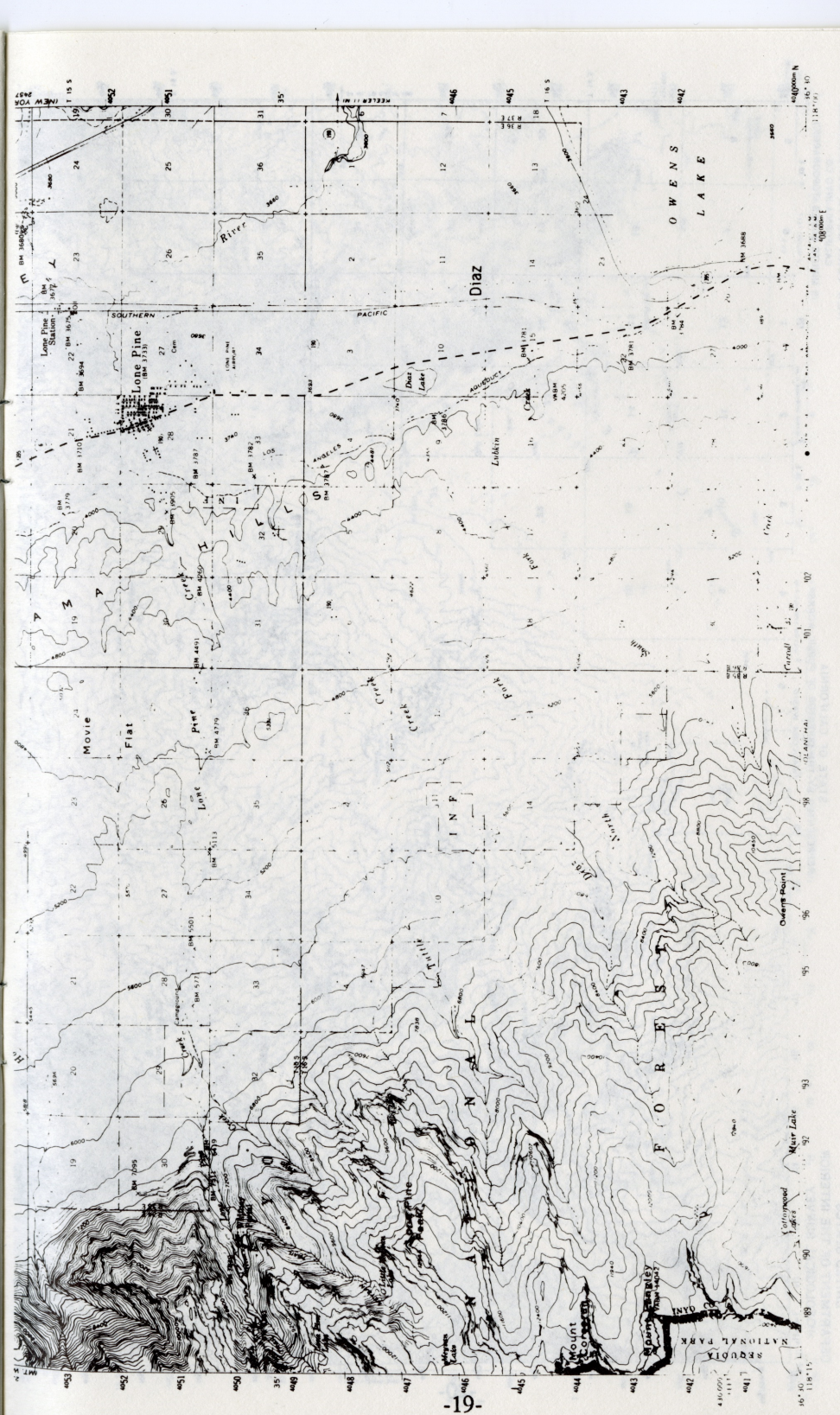
Lone Pine
Lone Pine Station
SOUTHERN PACIFIC
Diaz
Diaz Lake
Lubkin Creek
Movie Flat
Lone Pine Creek
Tuttle Creek
Owens Point
Muir Lake
Cottonwood Lakes
Mount Corcoran
Mount Langley
SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK
OWENS LAKE
NATIONAL FOREST

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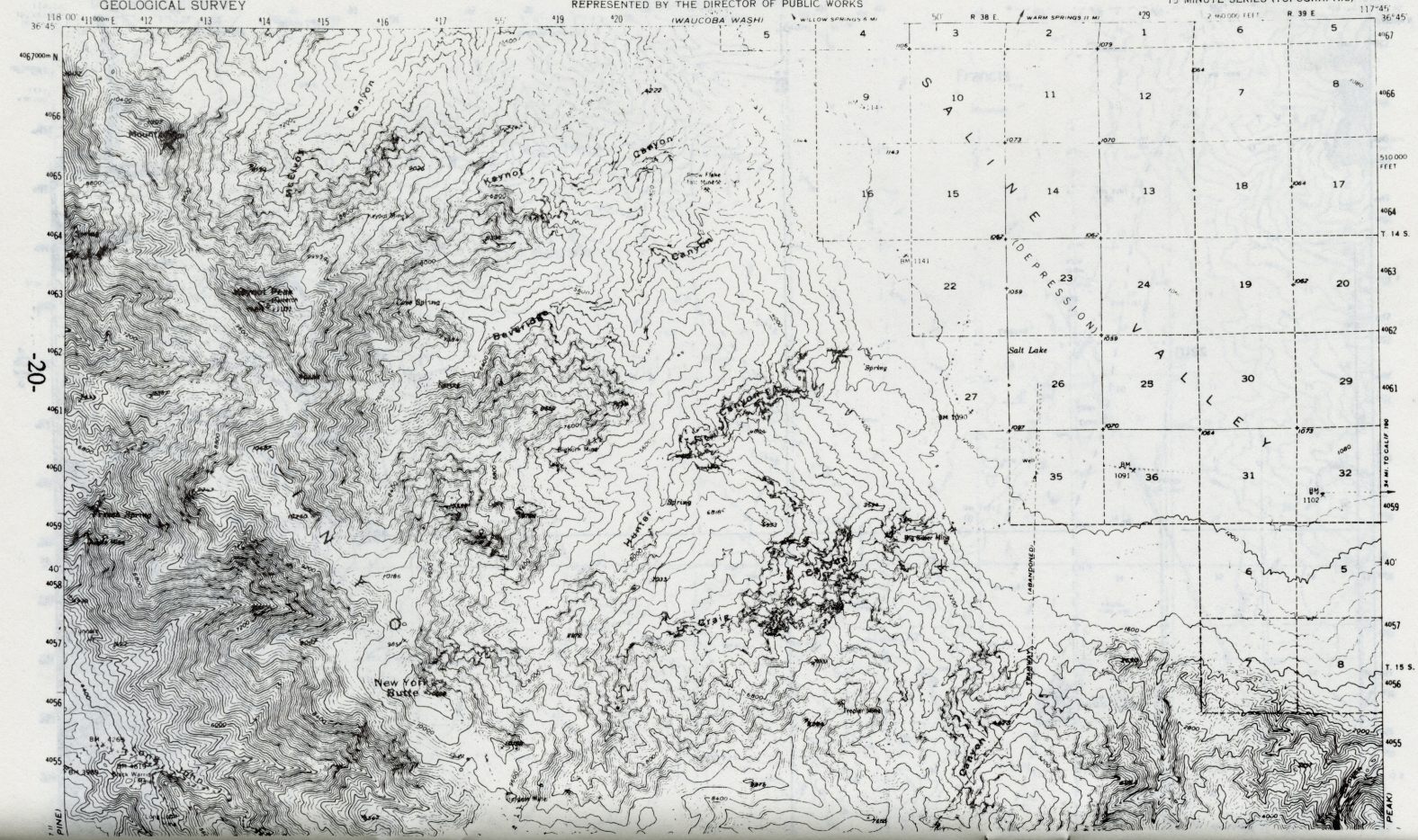

MOUNTAINS
OWENS VALLEY
OWENS LAKE
Tramway
Cerro Gordo
Dalsy
Swansea
Mock
Dolomite
SOUTHERN
PACIFIC
OWENS RIVER
Conglomerate Mesa
LONE PINE 4.9 MI
2.4 MI TO U.S. 6.8 395
T 16 S
R 37 E
R 38 E
LONE
UBEHEBE